

The clergy are not only immoral, they are the oppressors of the poor man. They harry him out of home and gear in payment of his church dues, and curse him into the bargain. " How did the parson ? " asks Diligence. " Was he not thy gude friend ? " " The devil stick him," returns poor man, " he curst me for my teind [tithe]." With his last groat poor man will go to a man of law, who will help him to get justice of the priest:—

" Thou art the daftest fuill
that e'er I saw," laughs Diligence,

" Trous thou, man, by the law to get
remeid Of men of Kirk ? No, nocht till
thou be deid."

Thereafter Robert Rome-raker, the pardoner, comes on the scene, produces his authority from the pope, damns the New Testament which is ruining his trade, lays out his relics for sale, including " a great horse bane," picked up from Dame Flescher's midden (dung heap), which he warrants to cure all the ills of soul and body. With his last groat, the poor man, yielding to his wiles, buys a pardon for a thousand years. The pardoner gives him nothing but pious assurances for his money, and poor man in a rage reclaims his groat, knocks him down, and kicks his relics into the water.

Part Second introduces us to an assembly of the Three Estates, with King Correction and Good Counsel as assessors. To King Correction John the Commonweal makes his complaint, and calls for a sweeping reform of the abuses in Church and State. The clergy stick to their teinds and their dues, and raise a chorus of dissent. The other two Estates pay no heed to their outcry. Nor shall any more money go to Rome for buying of benefices, whereby the land is drained of its gold and silver. Priests shall hold no more than one benefice ; bishops and priests shall, moreover, learn to preach, if Act of Parliament can do it. Preach ! cries the Spirituality. " Friend, quhair find ye that we should preachers be ?" Good Counsel quotes St Paul's Epistles to Timothy. The bishops would to God that Paul had ne'er been born. " Sir," asks Good Counsel, "read ye never the New Testament?" " No, sir/" returns Spirituality, " I never read the New Testament, nor the Auld." What have you your teinds for, then ? asks the Third Estate.